



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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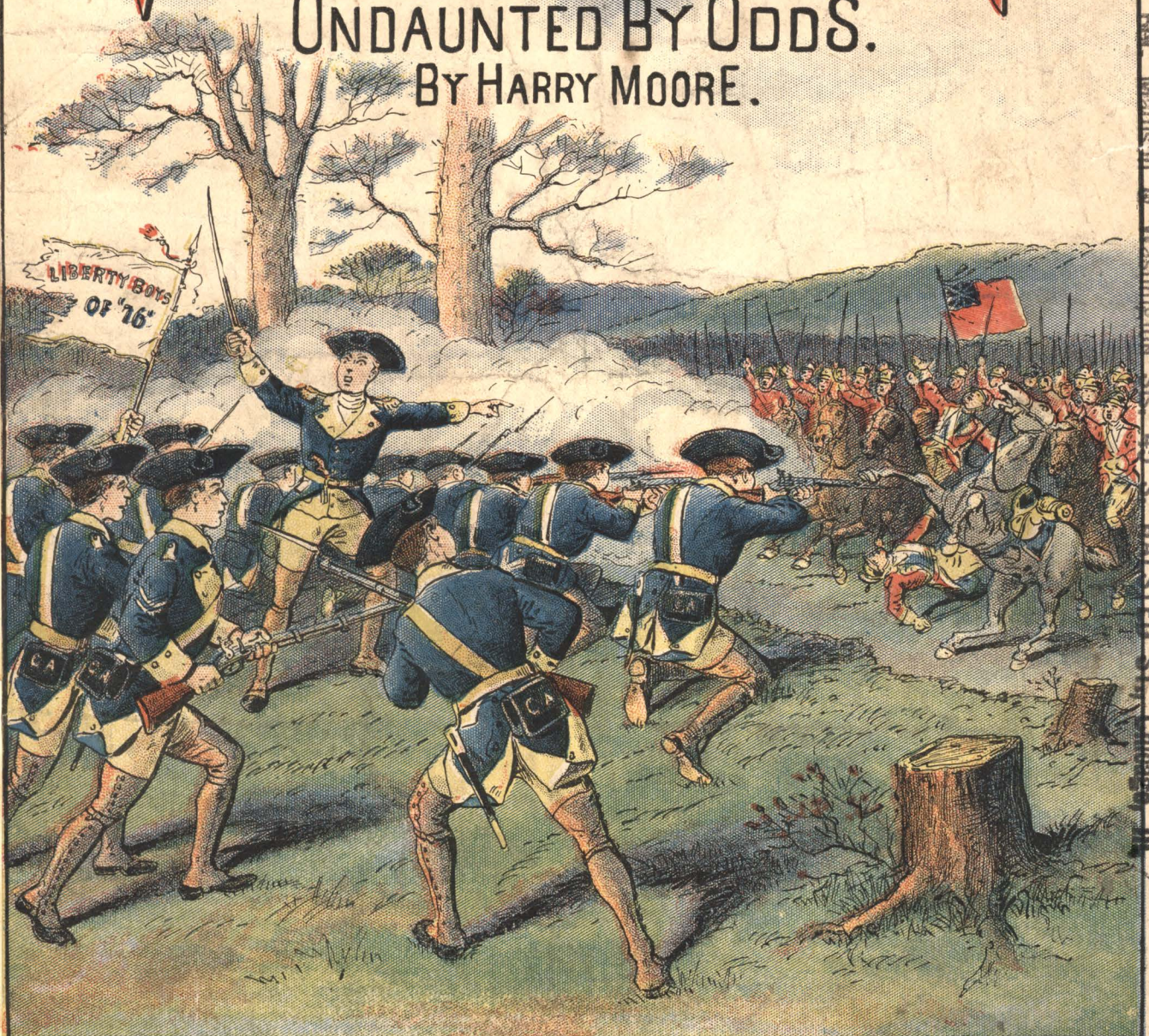
No. 11.

NEW YORK, MARCH 15, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS' PLUCK; OR UNDAUNTED BY ODDS.

BY HARRY MOORE.



The Liberty Boys were undaunted by the terrible odds. "Let us bring down that hated flag and trample it in the dust!" cried Dick.

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CHAPTER I.

SENT ON A DANGEROUS ERRAND.

"Orderly!"

"Yes, your excellency."

"Send Dick Slater to me at once!"

"Yes, your excellency."

General Washington, the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, sat in his room at the headquarters.

He had just finished an interview with several of the members of the staff.

It had been a sort of council of war.

It was in the month of May, 1777.

Washington and his troops, to the number of about eight thousand, occupied an impregnable position on Morristown Heights, in the State of New Jersey.

They had come there from Trenton in January, and had been there ever since.

The British had been defeated in two engagements, and were preparing to attack Washington's army, and the roads being impassable on account of the snow, General Howe had decided to wait till Spring to resume operations against the patriot army.

It was now May.

He had as yet done nothing.

Washington could not understand it.

Neither could his generals, the members of his staff.

Why was Howe waiting?

Why was not Cornwallis trying to do something to push the war along?

These were the questions that Washington had asked himself, and being unable to answer them satisfactorily, he had called in the members of his staff to see if they could furnish an answer.

This had been the subject under discussion in the council of war.

But the members of the staff had been unable to answer the questions.

They were as much puzzled by the action—or lack of action—of the British as was the commander-in-chief.

They could offer no reasonable explanation for the inactivity of the British.

The council had adjourned, the members of Washington's staff had taken their departure, and then Washington had sent for Dick Slater.

Fifteen minutes later steps were heard in the hall outside.

Then the door opened and the orderly entered.

He was accompanied by a handsome, manly-looking youth of about eighteen years of age.

"Dick Slater, your excellency," the orderly announced, and withdrew.

"Ah, Dick! glad to see you!" said the commander-in-chief, giving Dick his hand; "be seated."

Dick replied in a respectful manner, and took a seat.

The commander-in-chief looked earnestly and searchingly at the youth.

He said nothing for nearly a minute—simply looked at Dick.

The youth stood the scrutiny with composure.

Presently the great general spoke.

"Dick," he said, "whenever I get into difficulties, whenever I am puzzled and don't know just what to do, I send for you!"

He smiled as he said this.

Dick smiled back at the great man.

"I am glad to hear it, your excellency!" he said, in a firm, musical voice. "I must say that I consider that a great compliment, and an honor as well."

"And I am glad to hear you say that, Dick!" said the commander-in-chief; "it has the right ring!"

Dick blushed.

He was a modest youth.

It always embarrassed him to hear himself praised.

"There is nothing that pleases me more than to be able to be of use to you, in this battle for liberty and independence!" the youth said. "Anything that I can do will be cheerfully done."

"I am sure of that, Dick. You have proven it on many occasions. Well, I have some work for you, but—it will be very dangerous work."

"It does not matter, your excellency; work to be of value in times such as these must needs be dangerous. No valuable work could be easy."

"You are right. I will tell you what it is that I wish you to do."

Dick remained silent, and looked inquiringly at the great general.

The commander-in-chief was silent for a few moments, and then he looked at Dick, and said:

"I have been expecting the British to make some kind of a move for several weeks past, Dick—ever since the winter broke, in fact, but so far they have done nothing, or made any move toward doing anything. Now, I am puzzled by their actions. I don't know what to make of it. It seems very strange, indeed. I fear they are preparing some kind of a surprise for us, and—well, I wish to get an inkling of what that surprise is likely to consist."

Dick nodded understandingly.

His eyes glowed eagerly.

"I see," he said; "you wish me to go and play the spy on them, as I have done at different times in the past."

Washington nodded.

"That is what I wish you to do, Dick," he said. "It will be a very difficult and dangerous task, however."

"No more so than on the former occasions, however," said Dick.

"Well—perhaps not. Still, there is great danger attached to the work."

"We will not think of that, at all," said Dick. "Where are Generals Howe and Cornwallis? In New Brunswick?"

"No; I think they are in New York. The main body of the army is at New Brunswick, but the commanders themselves have their headquarters in the city. It is much more comfortable there," and Washington smiled.

"Then I had better go direct to New York?"

"Yes; you will be more likely to gather information of their plans there than at New Brunswick."

"Very well, your excellency. I will start this afternoon at such time as will bring me to New York after nightfall."

"Suit yourself as to that, my boy. Use your own judgment as to how and when to go, and all I ask is that you exercise all possible care not to allow yourself to be captured."

"I shall do that, your excellency; and—I will return and report to you as soon as I have learned news of importance."

"Do so, Dick. I shall await your coming with some eagerness, for I am sorely puzzled by the peculiar tactics of the British."

The commander-in-chief gave Dick some further instructions, and then the youth bade the great man good-bye, saluted and withdrew.

"Well, well! Here is a chance for action at last!" the youth mused, as he left headquarters. "I am tired of being cooped up here, and shall be mighty glad of the chance to get out and stir around, danger or no danger!"

Dick was a brave youth.

He was not a reckless one; but the thought that the work he was about to enter upon was dangerous had no deterrent effect whatever.

If anything, it made him all the more eager to be about the work.

If there was to be danger, he would overcome it.

Dick was soon at the quarters occupied by the company of "Liberty Boys"—a company of youths of about Dick's own age, which had been made up by Dick and a near friend of his, a youth named Bob Estabrook.

They had adopted the name of "The Liberty Boys of '76."

They had done great work for the cause of Liberty.

They were terrible fighters, and when in battle their example was of great value, as they always fought so furiously as to enthuse those around them.

There were as a rule impulsive, headlong charges upon the forces of the British when they were in the action.

The fame of the "Liberty Boys" had spread, and their names were in the mouths of the redcoats, as well as the mouths of the patriot soldiers.

The "Liberty Boys" had done good work during the winter months, by worrying the British, by attacking scattered bands of foragers.

They had captured a goodly number of the redcoats in this manner.

But still, they had not as much action as they would have liked to have had.

When Dick told them he was to go to New York on a spying expedition they groaned in concert.

"Oh, say, can't we all go, Dick?" asked Sam Sunderland, with such a comical air that Dick could not help laughing.

"I'm afraid we couldn't very well do much spy-work if we were all to go!" he said. "It would be difficult to slip into the British lines unnoticed."

"We could fight our way in, Dick," said Mark Morrison.

"Yes, but we might have difficulty in fighting our way out again, Mark!"

"I judge that would be a little bit difficult," dryly.

"Say, I'm going with you, Dick!" said Bob Estabrook.

"I hardly think it would be advisable, Bob," was Dick's reply.

"Why not?" in a disappointed tone.

"Oh, for the reason that one can get around without attracting attention better than two could."

"Yes, but two could fight to better advantage, if they were discovered and set upon by the redcoats, Dick."

Dick laughed.

"That is Mark's argument, in principle," he said. "The difference is only in degree."

"Oh, you're good at arguing!" said Bob, in disgust. "There is no use talking to you!"

"Well, not much, that's a fact," laughed Dick, good-naturedly. "I think I shall have to go alone this time, Bob."

"All right, and good luck to you, old man. Don't let the redcoats gobble you up!"

"No danger of that, I guess."

The other youths did not know so well about it.

They all thought the world and all of Dick.

They were solicitous for his welfare.

They also offered him much well-meant advice.

All of which Dick took in good part.

Dick knew it was love for him that animated them.

"That will do, boys," he said, with a smile; "don't say another word! I shall take the best of care of myself, and I am not going to let the redcoats capture me, if I can help it."

"See that you don't!" said Bob. "If you are not back here in a reasonable length of time, I shall come after you!"

"Be sure you wait a 'reasonable length of time,' Bob!" said Dick, with a laugh.

"Well, I am going to be the judge as to that!"

Dick began making his preparations at once.

It did not take him long.

All he did was to don a suit of clothes that did not in any way resemble the clothing worn by the majority of patriot soldiers.

His weapons, of course, he looked to with great care.

These he hid under the skirt of his coat.

He might try to play a part, or represent a character in the make up of which pistols would be out of place, and he did not wish them to be showing.

It was about the middle of the afternoon when Dick started.

He rode away in an easterly direction.

He was headed for Paulus Hook.

This was at a point directly opposite New York, and was just about where is now Jersey City.

The distance from Morristown Heights was about twenty miles.

Dick could have ridden the distance and arrived at Paulus Hook by sundown easily, but he preferred not to get there until after nightfall, so he rode leisurely.

Dick had not formulated any definite plans.

It was, indeed, impracticable to do so.

He would have to wait and be governed by circumstances as they should arrive.

He had confidence that he could take care of himself under most circumstances.

He had done it before, and felt that he could do it again.

Confidence is a good thing to have.

Dick had it in plenty; but he was not egotistic.

It was about eight o'clock when Dick reached Paulus Hook.

He rode down to the ferry landing as boldly as could be.

A flat-bottomed ferryboat was there.

There were a lot of redcoats on the boat, and it was about to start for the New York side.

Dick rode onto the flatboat as bold as brass, and leaping down, took hold of the bits, to hold the horse, and keep it from shying.

He was not two yards from a dozen redcoats, who were standing in a bunch.

One of the redcoats looked at Dick searchingly for a few moments—the moon being up and giving considerable light—and then, not being satisfied seemingly, with looking at the youth from that distance, he walked right up to Dick and peered suspiciously into his face.

CHAPTER II.

DICK DISCIPLINES A REDCOAT.

Dick stood the scrutiny unflinchingly.

At the same time he, without seeming to do so, kept his face shaded by his hat brim as much as possible.

"Who are you?" the redcoat asked presently.

"My name is Barton," replied Dick quietly; "Tom Barton."

"Humph!" the fellow grunted. "Where do you live?"

"I live on Manhattan Island."

"You do, eh?"

"Yes."

"What have you got there, Larkins?" asked one of his companions; "a rebel?"

"I shouldn't be surprised." Then to Dick:

"Where have you been?"

"Over in Jersey a ways."

"What were you doing over there?"

"I went on an errand."

"On an errand, eh?"

"Yes."

"Who for—yourself?"

"No; for my employer."

"Oh; who do you work for?"

"Mr. Murray's folks."

Dick answered on the impulse of the moment.

He knew that there were people of that name living on the north end of the island.

"Oh, for the Murrays, eh?"

"Yes."

The redcoat turned to his companions.

"Aren't the Murrays, up on the island, rebels?" he asked.

"Well, not exactly," replied one. "They claim to be loyal to the king."

"They claim to be; but I don't think they are." The other redcoat said to Dick:

"What were you doing over in Jersey?"

Dick looked at the fellow straight in the eyes, and then asked:

"You mean, what was my errand?"

"Yes; what was your errand?"

"That is none of your business!" said the youth promptly.

An exclamation of anger and surprise escaped the redcoat.

"What's that!" he claimed. "Do you dare talk in that fashion to me? Why, I'll slap the face off you, you young rascal!"

"You will?" remarked Dick, evidently not in the least frightened.

"Yes, I will!" and the redcoat made a threatening motion.

"Oh, what's the matter with you, Larkins?" asked one of his companions. "Let the boy alone. What do you want to pick a fuss with him for?"

"Because, I believe he has been over to the rebel army, Hackensack, with a message of some kind!—that's what I am going to find out whether or not this is the case."

"Oh, you're crazy! If the boy had been doing anything of that kind he wouldn't have ridden aboard this boat with all us fellows here. Let up on the boy."

But Larkins wasn't one of the let-up kind.

He was obstinate and bull-headed.

When he started to do a thing, he always wished to do it.

He had gotten it into his head that Dick was mixed in some way with the "rebels," and he wasn't going to let up on the youth until he had forced him to tell where he had been and what he had been doing.

He turned on Dick again, almost fiercely.

"Are you going to tell me where you have been, and where you went there?" he asked.

"I am not!"

Dick's voice was quiet and firm.

"You had better!"

The redcoat almost hissed the words.

"I don't think so."

Dick was as cool and calm as could be.

He did not seem to be the least alarmed.

All noticed this fact, but they attributed it to ignorance.

They thought that he did not know enough to be frightened.

The truth was the fellow, Larkins, was a bully, and was never so happy as when in a quarrel of some kind.

And if he could get the other fellow worked up to the fighting pitch, so much the better.

And when he could not find a man to pick a quarrel with he would do the next best thing—take a boy.

Of course, this stamped him a coward.

But as he was physically a strong fellow, and knew something of the art of self-defense, he had been able so far to beat the better of his opponents almost without exception.

His brute strength did it for him.

His companions were really afraid of him.

They saw he was determined to pick a quarrel with the youth, so they shrugged their shoulders, as much as to say they washed their hands of the affair, and said no more.

The youth would have to look out for himself.

They little knew that he was amply able to do so.

They supposed he would be as a plaything in the hands of the burly Larkins.

Which was where they missed it.

But, of course, they could not know.

"I will ask you once more," said the redcoat threateningly, "where have you been, and what did you go there for?"

"And I tell you once more," said Dick very calmly and quietly, "that it is none of your business."

A murmur of surprise went up from the redcoat's companions.

They were amazed at the temerity of the youth.

A cry of anger went up from the redcoat.

"See here," he almost hissed; "you don't know what you are doing, boy! I have knocked the heads off of men for less than that!"

"Have you?" asked Dick, innocently.

Some of the redcoats laughed outright.

The refreshing innocence of the youth, his utter unconsciousness of his danger, was to them so absurd as to be laughable.

But the redcoat who was doing the talking did not laugh. He simply gave utterance to a sort of gasp of amazement. He stared at Dick in silence for perhaps ten seconds, and then said:

"Have you?"

He said it in a tone of mockery, and then he immediately answered the question.

"Yes, I have! And now I am going to give you a little lesson. It shall not cost you a cent, but it will be worth considerable to you just the same!"

"Oh, if it's valuable, I shall be willing to pay for it," said Dick, with charming simplicity, and again the redcoat's companions snickered.

This had as much to do, almost, with making the fellow angry as Dick's air and tone.

He was now almost unable to control himself.

He felt like striking Dick down, but restrained himself, for the reason that he thought it would be considered not just the thing by his companions.

"I'll just slap his face a bit," he thought, and aloud he said:

"I ask no pay for the lesson, young fellow. It will be given entirely free. Are you ready for it?"

"I suppose so," Dick replied; "but of what does the lesson consist? In what line is it?"

"It is a correction for sauciness," was the reply, "and consists of a slap alongside the ear—like that!"

As he spoke he aimed a slap with his open hand at Dick's face, but the youth was on his guard, and reaching up with wonderful quickness, he seized the redcoat's wrist, and gave it a terrible wrenching twist that brought a howl of pain from the fellow's lips.

He dropped to his knees, at the same time crying out:

"Oh—h—h! You have broken my arm! Oh—h—h—h! Curses on you, you young fiend; but I'll have your life for that!"

Cries of surprise and wonder escaped the lips of the spectators.

They had not expected to see anything of the kind.

They had expected nothing else than that their companion would be able to do as he pleased with the youth.

And now, to see the ease with which said youth had seized the man by the arm, given it a terrible twist, almost breaking it, and bringing the owner, a stout, heavy man to his knees, was astonishing.

They did not know what to think of it.

To tell the truth, however, the majority of them were glad of it.

The redcoat was a bully, and as such was feared by the majority.

Those who did not fear him, held him somewhat in awe, and were afraid that they might have to engage in a fight with him at almost any time.

So it pleased, rather than displeased them, to see him taken down in this fashion by the youth.

A feeling of admiration for the youth sprang up in their breasts.

They felt that he was in danger now.

Their companion was a wicked fellow, and would without doubt resort to weapons to enable him to even up the score with the youth who had brought him howling to his knees.

Dick, as soon as the redcoat fell to his knees and cried out in pain, let go of the fellow's wrist, and stood there quietly.

seemingly the least interested and excited person on the boat.

"The gentleman failed to make a success of his lesson after all!" he remarked with the utmost coolness.

By this time the redcoat had scrambled to his feet.

He was wild with anger.

It was his right arm that had been wrenched.

He drew back and struck a fierce blow at Dick with his left hand.

"Take that!" he almost screamed.

But Dick did not intend to accept any such favors.

He threw up his left arm, warding the blow off.

He held his arm rigid, and the redcoat was whirled half around.

Then with his left fist—Dick had not let go of the bits with his right hand—the youth struck out straight from the shoulder.

His fist took the redcoat just below the ear.

Although delivered with the left fist, the blow was a terrible one.

Some right-handed people can strike harder with the left hand than with the right.

It was so with Dick.

The blow felled the man to the deck as though he had been struck with a club.

He was not knocked senseless.

He was dazed, temporarily, however.

For a few moments he lay there, silent and motionless.

Doubtless he did not know what had happened.

A gasp of wondering amazement went up from the spectators.

It was the most amazing thing they had seen in many a day.

The youth had knocked the bully down at a single blow.

And a blow delivered with the left hand!

It was wonderful, indeed.

It was astounding.

And the youth had not had to let go of the bits as yet.

He was still holding his horse and looking at the fallen man in the calmest manner imaginable.

He did not seem in the least excited.

And the sympathies of the members of the crowd of redcoats were with Dick.

This was quickly proven.

Noting that their companion seemed unconscious for the time being at least, one said:

"You will need to look out for him when he comes to and gets up, young fellow. He will use pistol or knife on you!"

"Thank you!" said Dick. "I will look out for him."

He did not seem the least bit frightened.

The soldiers noted this, and their respect for him increased with great rapidity.

He was altogether the most wonderful young fellow they had run across in a good while.

Just then the fallen man stirred.

Then he struggled to a sitting posture, and looked around him.

He seemed not to know where he was at first.

Then, of a sudden, as his eyes fell on Dick it all seemed to come back to him.

He gave utterance to a hoarse cry of rage, and struggled to his feet.

"I'll kill you, curse you!" he cried, and he dropped his hand upon the butt of his pistol.

"Don't do it!" said Dick, in a stern, threatening tone of voice. "Take my advice, and let well enough alone!"

But the man was in no condition to take advice from anyone.

Least of all would he have accepted it from the youth who had downed him so easily in the presence of the companions over whom he had bullied.

He would have to do something desperate now to regain his lost laurels.

He was in the mood for it certainly.

He fairly panted for it, revenge on the youth.

So with a snarl, he jerked the pistol out of his belt.

There was not the least doubt but that he intended shooting the youth down.

But before he could get the weapon levelled, Dick, letting go his hold of the bits at last, leaped forward, and seizing the man in a grip wonderful for its strength, lifted the fellow bodily, and threw him headlong over the side of the boat into the Hudson River.

CHAPTER III.

THE WOMAN IN BLACK.

A cry of wonder and amazement went up from the spectators.

The exhibition of strength by the youth had been a surprise to them.

They would never have thought that a youth like Dick could be possessed of such strength.

"Man overboard!" cried out Dick.

He did not want the fellow to drown.

All he cared for was that he should get a good ducking. This would cool him off considerably, and perhaps he might

be willing to behave himse' after he was taken back onto the boat.

"He'll drown!" cried one of the redcoats. "I don't believe Larkins can swim."

"That's right," from another; "he can't swim!"

"He'll be drowned, sure!"

"He won't be able to keep up very long!"

But none of them made a move toward going to the rescue of the imperilled man.

Dick ran to the extreme end of the boat and looked back at the man.

He was floundering in the water, but it was evident from his actions that he would go under in a few moments.

Dick dropped upon the deck and pulled off his boots.

Rising, he leaped headlong into the river.

Cries of amazement and admiration went up from the redcoats.

"What a remarkable youth!"

"He threw Larkins in the river, and now he is going to try to get him out!"

"That is a queer way to do!"

They could not understand the feelings which animated Dick.

He could kill men in battle.

That was just and 'right—that was war, and was made necessary by the exigencies of the occasion.

But to be the death of a fellow man simply as the result of a quarrel and an encounter at fisticuffs—Dick did not wish this to occur.

His idea in throwing the fellow into the river was that the contact with the cool water would cool the fellow off, and make him less eager to fight or pick a quarrel, at least temporarily.

He naturally supposed, when he threw the fellow in, that he could swim, but the redcoats said he could not.

This being the case he would, unless saved by someone, be drowned.

This must not be allowed, and as no one else seemed to be willing to take the risk of going overboard after the redcoat, he decided to do it himself.

So he had acted as we have seen.

The struggling redcoat was now forty or fifty feet behind the boat, and Dick struck out toward him with strong strokes.

Dick was a splendid swimmer.

Having lived all his life close to the Hudson River, he had been in swimming in said river hundreds of times—he and Bob Estabrook.

The youth saw that it was going to be a close race, if he

reached the struggling man in time to keep him from going down.

He redoubled his efforts.

He seemed, even though dressed, to fairly cleave the water.

Closer and closer he drew, but while he was yet ten feet distant from the man, the fellow threw up his hands, gave a gurgling cry and disappeared from sight beneath the water.

Dick dived instantly, and swam diagonally onward and downward.

He knew he would come in contact with the drowning man very quickly.

And he did.

He reached the man, seized him in a strong clutch, and struck out upward, toward the surface.

He soon reached it.

His companion was already unconscious.

"Help!" cried Dick, as soon as he reached the surface with his burden. "Come back with the boat at once!"

The boat had already stopped, and Dick heard excited exclamations from the men clustered at the stern, looking back to where he was.

"By Jove! he has Larkins!" Dick heard one exclaim.

"Yes," from another. "He brought Larkins back up, sure as shooting!"

"That was a brave act!"

"He's a strange sort of fellow."

"Come back with the boat!" cried Dick. "Hurry! This man is heavy!"

There were excited exclamations, the sound of orders, and then the boat was seen to be coming slowly back toward Dick.

He could not swim to meet the boat.

The burden which he was forced to hold up would not permit of his doing it.

It taxed his strength to the utmost to keep himself and the insensible man on the surface, without trying to swim to meet the boat.

It did not take long for the boat to reach Dick, however, slowly as it advanced, for the distance was not great.

A score of hands reached down and seized both Dick and his burden as the boat reached them, and both were pulled out of the water and onto the deck.

Dick removed his outer clothing, wrung the water out of it, and put it back on again, while the redcoat's companions turned their attentions to resuscitating him.

This proved to be not such a very difficult task, as he had been unconscious but a short time.

He was soon able to get on his feet again.

But he showed no disposition toward wishing to renew the fight between Dick and himself.

He had had a sufficiency.

He had come within an ace of losing his life, and the realization of this fact seemed to have a quieting effect on him.

Then, too, some of his companions had told him that Dick had saved his life.

He could hardly renew a fight with one who had just risked his life for him.

The boat had resumed its journey across the river, and would soon reach the other shore.

Dick had returned to his station by his horse, and was waiting quietly and patiently.

Several of the redcoats came and began talking to Dick.

They thanked him for saving the life of their comrade and praised him for his prompt action.

"But for you, Larkins would have drowned, sure!" said one.

"But for me, he wouldn't have been in the river," said Dick, with a smile.

"Well, when you come back to that Larkins was to blame for the whole affair," was the reply. "He picked the quarrel with you, and brought his trouble upon himself. You were in no way to blame, and did just right in pitching him into the river—though I don't see how you did it! Jove! but you must be extraordinary strong for a young fellow!"

"Oh, I'm fairly strong," smiled Dick.

"I should say you were."

The other shore was now reached, and the soldiers began leaving the boat.

"Come up to our quarters," invited one of the two who had been talking to him and complimenting him. "You will catch cold in that damp suit. Come up with us, and stay till your clothes dry, at any rate."

"Have you an extra suit that I can put on?" asked Dick.

"Yes, a dozen. Come along with us."

Dick thought this would be a good plan.

He could not have had things more to his liking if he had had the arranging of them himself.

He wished to enter the quarters of the British.

To do this, ordinarily, would be a difficult matter.

This would simplify matters greatly.

He could go to the headquarters with these British soldiers, and once there he could doubtless think of some scheme that would allow of his remaining for longer than just an hour or two.

The hardest part of the entire affair would be to get into the quarters, and now it was to be made easy and simple.

So Dick accepted the invitation, and said he would go with them.

He remained with the two who had talked to him.

Dick was shrewd.

The fact that they had taken the trouble to come and talk to him and compliment him on his bravery proved that they were good-hearted, generous-minded fellows.

Those were the kind of men he wished to be with.

Of course he had no desire to keep in the company of the fellow whose life he had placed in jeopardy, and therefore he saved.

It was not far from the landing to the building in which the two whom Dick was with had their quarters.

"What will I do with my horse?" asked Dick.

"An orderly will take the horse, put him in the barn, and give him a feed," was the reply.

Dick relinquished the horse into the hands of an orderly when the house was reached, and then entered the building in company with the two.

"Come up to our room," said one. "I have several suits and you can put one of those on."

"All right, and thank you," said Dick.

They went up two flights of stairs and along a hall.

At the end of the hall they paused and entered a room.

It was a fairly good-sized room, and comfortably furnished.

One of the redcoats, whose name as Dick learned, was Frederick Winston, brought forth an entire outfit of clothing, including both under and outer clothing.

"We are about of a size," he said. "I think they will fit you. The adjoining room is vacant; you can go in there if you like and change."

Dick acted on the suggestion, and half an hour later returned to the room.

He was dressed in the regulation uniform of the British soldier, and the clothes fitted him first rate.

"I spread my clothes in the other room and left them to dry," he said; "that will be all right, I presume."

"Oh, yes," was the reply. "The room is not occupied, so will not be needed, and your clothes will not be in anyone's way."

"Say," said the other redcoat, whose name was Harry Mortimer, "you would make a fine-looking soldier, Barton. Better join us!"

"I have thought of it at different times," he said, "but it never came handy for me to do so. I believe I should like it better than working out."

"I know you would," enthusiastically. "You don't have to do much of anything, only eat, drink and be merry. W"

"on't have to do anything only take it easy and wait for the rebels to starve to death."

"That isn't hard work," said Dick.

"No, not very," laughed Mortimer. "Better make up our mind to join us."

"I'll think of the matter," said Dick.

"Anybody to object to your joining the army?" asked Winston; "parents, sweetheart?"

"No," replied Dick; "I could join if I chose."

"Then you'd better choose to join, Barton. We'd be glad to have you with us. We need you—eh, Mortimer?"

"That's right; he'd be of service to the entire regiment. I think Larkins would behave himself if Barton was with us."

"So he would. I believe that Barton could keep him within bounds, all right."

"I am sure of it."

"But I wouldn't care to join the British army just to act as a restraining influence against one of the men in the regiment," smiled Dick.

The other two laughed.

"No, I suppose not," from Mortimer; "nor would we ask you to do so. That came as an afterthought."

"I see."

Winston produced some cigars, and he offered Dick one.

"I do not smoke," said Dick; "thanks just the same."

"We do, eh, Mortimer?" with a laugh.

"Yes, indeed!"

"You don't mind our smoking?" remarked Winston.

"Certainly not!" replied Dick.

The two lighted the cigars, and began smoking with evident relish.

They entered into conversation with Dick, and feeling that he was almost a comrade, they talked unreservedly.

They knew considerable of what was going on, and Dick was sure that if he could spend a few days here he could pick up a lot of valuable information.

"I think I shall have to try to stay," he thought; "even if I have to go to the extent of pretending to join the British army."

He asked questions in a simple, careless way that were calculated to bring out such information as he wished to obtain, and he did obtain quite a good deal of information.

They were sitting there, talking and laughing, when suddenly the door of the room opened.

The door opened inward, and as the three saw it opening, and looked up, they were almost paralyzed by the sight that met their gaze:

A woman stood in the doorway!

And such a strange, weird-looking woman.

She was tall and well-formed, was dressed in black, and had a thick black veil over her face and black gloves on her hands.

"The mysterious woman in black!" gasped Mortimer.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN FRINK.

"The mysterious woman in black!" repeated Dick, in wondering amazement.

There was an admixture of awe in his tone as well.

"Ah! he is not here!" said the woman in black, in a low, sad voice. "I will find him yet!"

Then the door was pulled shut quickly, but without noise, and the mysterious woman was gone.

The three sat, paralyzed as it were, for a few moments, and then Dick leaped to his feet and opened the door.

He looked out into the hall.

No one was there.

Their mysterious visitor had disappeared.

His companions had aroused themselves also, and had followed suit.

"She's gone!" said Mortimer.

"As usual!" said Winston.

Dick looked at the two inquiringly as he closed the door and they returned to their seats.

"Who and what is she?" he asked.

The two shook their heads.

"You tell!" said Winston; "we never will!"

"Never!" said Mortimer.

"You don't know, then."

Both shook their heads.

Dick was greatly interested.

He had always had a liking for mystery of any kind.

And here was one with a vengeance.

He realized that this was not the first appearance of the mysterious woman in black.

Mortimer's exclamation when the woman had appeared so suddenly and unexpected proved that.

She had been seen before.

But by whom, and when, and where?

He decided to find out.

"You have seen the woman in black before?" he asked.

The two young redcoats shook their heads.

"No," replied Mortimer. "We've never seen her before. This is the first time."

"Others have seen her, then," asserted Dick.

Both nodded.

"Yes, others have seen her," replied Winston.

"Who?"

Both made gestures.

"Who? Oh, a dozen," replied Mortimer.

Dick looked interested.

"Where have they seen her?"

"In this house!"

Dick was surprised.

"Always in here?"

"Always."

"She has never been seen anywhere else?"

"No."

"On the street?"

"No."

"Always in this house!"

"Yes; always here."

"That is strange!" said Dick.

"Strange, but true, nevertheless, Barton."

"How long has this been going on? How long since she was first seen, I mean?"

"Oh, it has been four or five months, I should say—eh, Winston?"

"I think that long, Mortimer."

"And then she has been seen two or three times each month, on an average."

"That is about it, Barton."

"H'm!" murmured Dick.

He stared at the floor reflectively.

He was greatly interested.

It was a strange affair.

It was enough to interest anyone.

"Have any of those who have seen this mysterious woman in black talked with her?" Dick asked, presently.

"Some of them tried to," said Mortimer; "but it did no good."

"She wouldn't answer them, then?"

"Not she!"

"Did you take note of the fact that she spoke when she was here a moment ago?" the youth inquired.

The redecoats nodded.

"Yes," replied Mortimer.

"Did you take note of what it was she said?"

"It was the same old story," said Winston.

"Ah! he is not here! I will find him yet!" quoted Mortimer.

"Then she always says that?"

"Not always, I think; but nearly always."

Dick was silent for a few moments, during which time seemed to be turning something over in his mind.

"She seems to be looking for some one," he said, presently.

"Yes—a man," said Mortimer, coolly.

"I'm glad it didn't turn out to be Mortimer or myself that she was looking for!" said Winston.

"So am I!" said Mortimer, heartily. "Jove! what if she had walked in here, laid her hand on Winston's shoulder and said, in that sepulchral voice of hers, 'I want you,' I'm afraid we should have left you to fight your own way out, old man!"

Winston grunted.

"There wouldn't have been much fighting," he said dryly. "I should have gone like a little man! Catch me putting up a fight against a mysterious woman in black. I guess not!"

"The safest plan would have been to go right along with her, I judge," agreed Mortimer.

"Has no one ever made an attempt to capture her?" asked Dick.

"To—what?" asked Mortimer.

"To capture her."

"Well, hardly!" was the dry reply. "My boy, you couldn't find a man in this regiment, or one who is quartered in this house, who would touch that woman!"

"Why not?"

"Why not!"

"Yes; why not?"

"It's simple enough; the majority believe there is something more than human about that woman, Barton. Did you notice how noiselessly she moved? Did you hear her as she went away? And where did she go to so quickly and mysteriously? Answer that?"

Dick shook his head.

"I could not answer that," he said; "but I do not believe there is anything supernatural about this woman in black."

"You think it a real, simon-pure, live, flesh and blood woman, then, do you?"

"I do."

"What makes you think so?"

"Common sense!"

"Oh, common sense, eh?"

"Yes."

"Then you don't take any stock in matters supernatural?"

"I do not."

"You are indeed a very matter-of-fact young man!" said Mortimer.

"I don't think it pays to be otherwise," said Dick, decidedly.

The two shook their heads again.

"That is all right," said Mortimer, "if you are built that way. As for myself, I don't happen to be constructed on that system. I wouldn't attempt to touch the woman in black for a fortune!"

"Nor would I!" from Winston.

"Well," said Dick, quietly, "if I join the army, and remain here, and should get a chance to do so, I shall make an effort to find out who and what the woman in black is, and where she comes from, and all about it."

"Yes, and if you do, we shall have a chance to attend our funeral soon afterward!" said Mortimer.

Dick smiled.

"I will risk it," he said.

The two looked at the youth admiringly.

"I believe you would!" said Mortimer.

"Well, you had better decide to join us, anyway," said Winston. "That will be the first move toward trying to fathom the mystery of the woman in black, if you think you would like to try to fathom it."

"I'll think it over," said Dick.

Then he rose and stretched.

"If you two do not object," he said, "I will go out in the hall and take a look around while you are finishing your smoke."

"Go along, Barton," said Mortimer, "but it will do you no good to look for that woman. You won't find her."

"Perhaps not. I may be able to get an inkling of where she comes from and where she goes, however."

Dick left the room.

He walked along the hall, clear to the farther end, and looked out of the window.

It was dark and he could see nothing.

Presently he returned to the room, to find his two new-found friends still industriously engaged in smoking.

"Well, what did you find?" smiled Mortimer.

"Nothing, eh?" from Winston. "I knew it would be so."

"Well, I hardly expected to find anything," said Dick. "I shall keep my eyes open, however, if I remain here any length of time."

"There's no law against that," said Mortimer, coolly.

"No, no one will try to keep you from doing that."

"There is one thing, though," said Dick, for the purpose of pumping his companions; "there would be no certainty of our staying here any length of time, would there? We may have to leave here, and march against the rebels at any time, may we not?"

"I don't think so," said Mortimer. "Here it is the month

of May and there has been no attempt to attack the rebels, and I don't believe the general intends to move against them at all. I think it is his scheme to let them starve and tire out."

"He will find that a scheme that will not work!" thought Dick. Aloud he said:

"That is a very easy way of making war against an enemy."

"It suits us soldiers, you may be sure!" said Mortimer, with a smile.

"Yes, indeed!" from Winston. "I would not feel sorry if the rebels were to hold out till fall. I'm in no hurry to go back to England."

Mortimer said the same.

The three were sitting there, talking, when the sound of excited talking was heard, also of hurried footsteps.

The loudest talking seemed to come from the floor below.

The hurried footsteps were those of persons hurrying along the halls on the floor Dick and his companions were on, and also on the floor below.

"I wonder what is up?" remarked Mortimer, turning his head and listening.

"Hard telling," replied Winston.

"Some of the boys have gotten into a difficulty, I judge," remarked Mortimer.

Dick rose and went to the door.

Opening the door, he listened.

Excited voices could be heard, and the hurrying footsteps as well.

"I believe something out of the ordinary has happened," said Dick.

The other two rose and came to the door.

They listened a few moments.

"I believe you are right, Barton," said Mortimer. "Let's go down and see what the trouble is."

They made their way along the hall, and downstairs to the next floor below.

A crowd was gathered in the hall in front of an open doorway.

"What's the trouble?" asked Mortimer.

"Captain Frink is dead!" replied a young soldier.

Dick started as he heard the name.

Captain Frink was an old enemy of his.

Dick had had trouble with him on two or three occasions, when playing the part of a spy, and had twice wounded the captain.

"Is he dead?" exclaimed Dick. "What killed him?"

"They don't know," was the reply. "He committed suicide, or was murdered, and they don't know which."

Dick turned and looked at Mortimer and Winston, who returned his look with interest.

The same thought had flashed into the mind of each:

"The woman in black!"

"She found him at last!" half whispered Mortimer in an awed tone

CHAPTER V.

DICK TAKES CHANCES.

The three remained there for some time, and finally got into the room and saw the body.

Dick had no morbid desire to see the dead man out of curiosity.

He simply wished to make sure that it was, indeed, his old enemy and not another of the same name.

When he saw the face of the dead man he knew that his old enemy would never trouble him again.

It was Captain Frink, sure enough.

The three left the room, and returned to their room on the floor above.

They talked of the mysterious affair for an hour at least. It was a strange affair, sure.

"Well, Barton," said Mortimer, finally, with a yawn, "have you made up your mind to join the army?"

"I don't know what to do," replied Dick.

"Sleep over it," suggested Winston.

"That's a good idea," said Mortimer. "I'll tell you what you do, Barton, you go in and take possession of the room adjoining. You can stay two or three days, if you like, or longer, and see how you would like it. There is no hurry about joining."

Now this exactly suited Dick.

He could not have fixed things more to his notion if he had had the arranging of it all.

"I believe I will do that," he said, after pretending to ponder the subject. "I shall have to stick pretty close to you two fellows, however, as I would be at a loss where to go and what to do if left to my own resources."

"Oh, we'll look after you, Barton," with a laugh. "We'll see to it that you don't get tangled up."

"All right; that will suit me first rate."

Then, after some further conversation, Dick bade them good-night, and went into the adjoining room.

He was tired and sleepy, and was soon in bed and asleep.

He was up early next morning and had been dressed and

waiting half an hour before he heard a stir in the adjoining room.

His friends were getting up, but it was an hour before they got dressed.

Then they came and knocked on his door.

"Are you awake, Barton?" called Mortimer's voice.

"Yes, and up and dressed two hours, at least," replied Dick.

Then he opened the door and joined the two in the hall.

"Good for you! You're an early riser, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, come along; breakfast is ready."

They made their way downstairs, to the first floor, where they entered a large room, evidently the dining room.

There were a number of tables there, and the majority of them were surrounded by redcoats, busily engaged in eating their breakfast.

They found a table where there were three chairs, and seated themselves.

Dick looked around the room at the faces of the men, and wondered if there were any among them that would know him.

He was afraid there might be, but no one seemed to take notice of him.

He did not see anyone whose face was familiar, and he felt better.

"The soldiers who were at Trenton are now at New Brunswick," he thought. "These fellows have never seen me."

The entire subject of conversation, seemingly, was the strange death of Captain Frink.

Dick listened and heard many theories advanced regarding how the officer came to his death.

Some thought he had committed suicide.

Others thought he had been murdered.

A few thought that he might have accidentally killed himself.

Dick was interested, too, to hear others still who mentioned with awe "the woman in black."

Mortimer and Winston both leaned toward this solution of the mystery of Captain Frink's death.

They, however, were superstitious, and thought the woman in black a supernatural being.

Dick, however, scouted this idea.

He believed the woman was a real, live woman. He had nothing of the superstitious in his make-up, and did not believe in ghosts and all that sort of thing.

It was a mystery, however, how the woman entered the building, made her way here and there, and then disap-

peared without anyone knowing where she went, or how, or whence she came.

"If I stay any length of time and she comes again I shall see what I can do to unravel the mystery," he thought.

But would she come again?

Dick asked himself this question, and then, as he thought of the dead man, Captain Frink, and remembered the woman's words—"Ah, he is not here! I will find him yet!"—he doubted her coming again.

With Mortimer and Winston, he more than half believed that she had found "him" at last.

After breakfast the three went out on the street.

It was at Mortimer's suggestion.

Dick was not very eager.

He felt that he would be running considerable risk.

He might meet some one who had seen him before and knew him as a patriot spy.

He would then have to fight for his life, for he would not tamely submit to capture.

There was no getting out of it, however.

So Dick made the best of it, and went along.

To see him one would not have suspected that he was anxious regarding everything.

He seemed utterly careless and care free.

He kept a sharp lookout in all directions, and eyed each group of redcoats they approached with keen scrutiny, but this did not attract the attention of his companions.

"Where is General Howe's headquarters?" asked Dick carelessly, as they walked along.

"His headquarters are around here always," said Mortimer; "come along, and we'll show you the place."

They walked a couple of blocks, and then Dick's companions pointed out the building in which General Howe had his headquarters.

They passed right by it, and as they came even with it, an English general came out upon the front stoop.

Dick gave a slight start, and turned his head away, pretending to be interested in something on the other side of the street.

The officer in question was General Howe himself.

He had seen Dick several times.

The youth had once penetrated into the very room where the general and his staff were holding a council of war.

The general had seen him then, and on two or three other occasions.

Dick feared he would be recognized if the general saw his face.

"There's General Howe!" whispered Mortimer in Dick's ear, and nudging him in the side.

Dick pretended not to understand, and did not look around.

"Look around if you wish to see the commander-in-chief of our army," whispered Mortimer. "He's standing on the stoop."

"Oh," said Dick, and then he looked around.

He was careful not to turn his face clear around, so that it would be toward the general.

General Howe glanced down at the three, and then called out:

"Mortimer! Here, please!"

Mortimer paused and saluting, advanced toward the steps.

He ran up them and stood in front of the commander-in-chief.

Dick and Winston had saluted, also, but they stood still, with the intention of waiting for their companion.

Dick would have liked to have gone on, but did not dare suggest it.

"What regiment do you belong to?" asked General Howe of Mortimer.

Mortimer told him.

"Isn't that Captain Frink's regiment?" was the next question.

"Yes, your excellency," replied Mortimer.

"I wish to ask you a few questions," said the general. "Come to my rooms."

"Yes, your excellency," replied Mortimer, and then he glanced toward Dick and Winston.

General Howe noted the glance.

"Tell your friends to come along also," he said. "They are members of your regiment, are they not?"

"Yes, sir," and then Mortimer called out:

"Come along, Winston and Barton."

Dick hardly knew what to do.

He feared to enter the building.

He could scarcely hope to be in the same room with the general and escape detection.

He held back.

"I think I'll walk up the street a ways," he said, in a low voice. "I don't care to enter the building. You go along."

The general and Mortimer were already turning to enter.

"Oh, come along!" insisted Winston, and he caught Dick by the arm and began pulling him along.

Dick saw that he could not get out of entering without either having trouble with Winston or arousing his suspicions.

Then the thought came to him that it had been six months or more since General Howe had seen him.

He would have forgotten how the young spy looked, to a certain extent, at least, in that time.

Then, too, Dick was dressed in the uniform of a British soldier.

The general would suppose him to be a redcoat, like the other two.

Thus he would not look at him closely.

Dick, too, looked somewhat different from what he had at that time.

He made up his mind to risk it.

There was a sort of dare-devil side to Dick's nature.

He enjoyed taking risks, if he had a reasonable chance to escape.

Then, he might discover something of value by entering. So he decided to do so.

"All right; I'll go along, Winston," he said.

They ran up the steps, and entered the building.

General Howe and Mortimer were making their way along the hall in front of them.

The two followed.

Presently the general paused in front of a door.

Opening it, he entered, followed by Mortimer.

The latter looked back, saw his companions, and motioned to them.

They entered, and Dick was very careful to have Winston enter first, he keeping behind his companion as much as possible.

General Howe was at that moment too busily engaged with his thoughts and with the matter that had caused him to conduct the three thither to take particular notice of them, however, and Dick was not in any danger of being recognized.

"Be seated," the general said, and the three sat down.

Here again Dick exercised caution, and managed to get partially behind Winston, and sat in such fashion that the side of his face would be toward the commander-in-chief.

Then General Howe began asking Mortimer questions regarding the matter of the death of Captain Frink.

The strange affair had evidently impressed him not a little, and he wished to learn all he could regarding it.

He inquired whether it was generally thought that the captain had been murdered, or whether he had committed suicide.

Mortimer talked unreservedly, and as a matter of course, it being uppermost in his mind, he mentioned the "woman in black."

This was the first time that the general had heard of the woman in black, and he asked a great number of questions regarding her.

At last he stopped questioning Mortimer, and intimated that he might go.

At the same instant the door opened, and the orderly announced:

"Captain Parks!"

A cold chill went over Dick.

Captain Parks was another officer who knew him, and knew him well.

If the captain got a look at his face he was sure to recognize Dick.

The youth realized this.

Dick kept his head, however.

He was as cool in appearance as either Mortimer or Winston.

And they, having absolutely nothing to fear, were cool and unconcerned.

"I should not have ventured in here," the youth thought. "I will be captured before I get out, if I am not careful."

"Come in, captain," called General Howe, and the next instant the captain stepped through the doorway.

Of course his eyes were on the commander-in-chief.

He might have seen the three young men, but not distinctly.

He saluted the general.

Dick seized upon the opportunity to walk quickly, but softly around, so as to bring both Mortimer and Winston between himself and the two officers.

Luckily both were slightly taller than Dick, so he was fairly well hidden behind their forms.

The three saluted and started to withdraw.

Dick was in the lead, and he was careful to get his back toward the general and the captain.

He half expected to be called out to by name by Captain Parks, but the captain's attention was upon the general, and he remained in blissful ignorance of the fact that he was within a few feet of Dick Slater, the patriot boy spy.

The next instant the three were out in the hallway, and Dick had just drawn a long breath of relief, when the sharp voice of General Howe was heard to call out:

"Wait, Mortimer! One moment, please!"

Dick's heart leaped into his throat.

Had Captain Parks recognized him after all?

It would seem so!

Dick quickly decided to make a break for liberty.

He would not be captured, if he could help it.

He had been in many tight places before to-day.

And had escaped.

And he would do his best to escape again.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRISONER.

But he did not have to make a break for liberty after all. Captain Parks had not recognized him.

General Howe had suddenly bethought himself that he wished a message taken to the keeper of the prison wherein the patriot prisoners were kept.

He wished Mortimer to take the message.

He was at the doorway, and handed the note to Mortimer.

"Kindly deliver that to the turnkey, at the jail—you know where it is; in the old City Hall Building—and oblige, Mr. Mortimer," he said.

"Certainly! Certainly, your excellency!" said Mortimer.

He was well pleased to think that he was to be of use to his commander-in-chief.

He considered it an honor to be selected to do the general a favor.

Dick drew another long breath of relief, and Winston slapped him on the shoulder, and said:

"What's the matter, Barton? Does it overawe you to be in the presence of the commander-in-chief of the British army? You'll get over it in time—when you become used to it, as are Mortimer and I!"

He chuckled as he said this, and Mortimer laughed.

"I'll wager that that is the first time you were ever in the headquarters of the commander-in-chief!" laughed Dick.

He felt good, now that he had escaped the danger which had threatened.

Both the redcoats laughed good-naturedly.

"You came very near hitting the nail on the head that time, Barton!" said Mortimer.

"That is the first time we have ever been in the presence of the commander-in-chief, excepting when we passed before him in review," said Winston.

"I thought so!" said Dick.

The youth was fast learning to like Mortimer and Winston.

They were a couple of fine young fellows.

They were jolly, good-natured, gentlemanly and accommodating.

"What a pity that such whole-souled fellows have to be considered as enemies!" he thought. "Under ordinary circumstances, we would be the best of friends."

They walked along the street, and were soon at Wall street.

The City Hall Building was here, and they went straight toward it.

The jailer met them at the front door.

Mortimer handed him the note from the commander-in-chief.

The jailer opened the note and read it.

Then he thrust the note in his pocket and beckoned to the three.

"Come along," he said.

"What is up?" exclaimed Mortimer, holding back; "you are not going to place us in jail!"

The jailer laughed.

"No; the note says you are to bring a prisoner to headquarters. Didn't you know that?"

"No; we have no idea what was wanted," replied Mortimer.

"Well, you know now; so come along."

The three followed the jailer unhesitatingly.

Dick's interest was at fever heat.

The men imprisoned in this building were all patriots.

He wondered if he would see any whom he would know.

How he wished that he might liberate the poor fellows.

It would be impossible to do this, however.

The jailer led the way along a long corridor, turned a corner, ascended a pair of stairs, and then made his way along another corridor, and came to a stop in front of a door.

The young men had, of course, kept close at his heels.

The man now produced a huge key, placed it in the lock, and unlocked the door, after which he threw the door open and entered.

The youths followed, and as Dick's eyes fell upon the face of the man imprisoned in this room, an exclamation of astonishment came very near escaping him.

The man was Charles Lee!—the general who had been left in charge of seven thousand troops by Washington at North Castle, in the early winter, and who had been ordered time and again by the American commander-in-chief to come over into New Jersey, with the troops, and join the army under Washington, but who had refused to do so.

Dick had been the bearer of several of these despatches from Washington to Lee, and knew the man well.

Lee knew Dick well, also, and the youth wondered if he would arouse the suspicions of the jailer and Dick's two companions by showing that he knew Dick.

Lee had good control of his face, however.

There was no doubt in Dick's mind that Lee knew him, but he showed no signs of surprise or excitement.

"Good!" thought the youth; "I am safe! I feared he would betray me by words or look."

Lee looked at the jailer inquiringly.

Dick was sure he looked slightly frightened, too.

"What is wanted?" he asked, surlily.

"You are wanted," was the reply.

"Who wants me?" in a startled tone.

"The commander-in-chief."

"General Howe?"

"Of course. We haven't a new commander-in-chief that I know of."

"And—I am to go to headquarters?"

"At once."

"With——"

Lee looked at Dick quickly.

There was a peculiar look in his eyes.

A look that Dick could not understand—then.

Months afterward, when it was known that Lee had proven himself a traitor, Dick remembered the look, and was sure he understood it.

Lee had already begun intriguing and was trying to purchase his freedom by being a traitor to the patriot cause, and giving such information as he possessed, together with advice, to the British general, Howe.

And he was afraid Dick might find this out, and betray him to Washington when he should return to the patriot army.

For Lee understood that Dick had in some manner managed to get into the midst of the British, and that he was playing his old part of a spy.

He made up his mind that, for his own safety, he would have to betray Dick to the British, and this would remove the danger to himself.

He decided to act at once.

"So I am to go to General Howe's headquarters with these men, am I?" he remarked.

"You are," was the jailer's reply.

"Very well," he said; "but before I go I wish to have a few words of conversation with you, in private."

The jailer returned to the three young men.

"Step out into the hall," he said.

They obeyed.

Dick's mind was working rapidly.

He did not like Lee.

He was suspicious of the man.

"I wonder what he can be up to?" thought the youth.

He felt uneasy.

Somehow he felt that he was to be the subject under discussion between the two.

"I wonder if he would betray me?" the youth asked himself.

"Surely not!" he decided. "It must be something else that he wished to talk to the jailer about."

So Dick dismissed his fears from his mind.

Presently the jailer called them back in.

Dick eyed him pretty closely.

He thought that if Lee had told the man anything about him the jailer could not help watching him with more or less interest.

But the jailer did not seem to take any particular notice of him.

"Their conversation was on some other topic," the youth thought.

"Take this man to headquarters at once," the jailer said, and Mortimer and Winston each took hold of one of Lee's arms—his hands were bound together behind his back—and led him out of the room and along the hall.

"See to it that he doesn't escape!" said the jailer to Dick, and the youth nodded and replied:

"We'll look out for him, sir."

They were soon out of the jail and were making their way in the direction of General Howe's headquarters.

Dick was thinking rapidly as he went along.

Things were becoming rather too complicated.

He might get into trouble at any moment.

If he were to re-enter the presence of General Howe and Captain Parks was still there, he would be recognized without a doubt.

What should he do?

How he wished something would come up to prevent him from having to go to headquarters.

His wish was gratified.

Just as they were about to cross a street a regiment of soldiers came along.

Mortimer and Winston, with the prisoner, hastened their steps and got across in front of the line of marching men, but Dick purposely lagged back enough so that he was cut off from crossing.

Then he at once turned squarely to the right, and made his way down the street, alongside the body of men, but going in the opposite direction.

"They won't wait for me, and I will return to my room in the house where they are quartered," the youth decided.

He would make the explanation to Mortimer and Winston that he knew he would not be needed, and that he had not deemed it necessary he should come on to headquarters after becoming separated from them.

"I wonder what General Howe wished to have Lee brought before him for?" Dick asked himself. "I would

like to hear their conversation, but of course that would have been an impossibility, even if I had gone to headquarters with them."

Dick walked slowly down the street, waiting for the regiment to pass.

Finally it had passed and he walked across the street and turned north.

He had gone three or four blocks, when he suddenly paused, with an exclamation of pleasure.

He stood in front of a house with which he was familiar.

It was the home of a man named Sanderson.

Mr. Sanderson was a strong patriot.

At the same time he had succeeded in making the British think he was loyal to the king.

He had once given shelter to Dick and his friend, Bob Estabrook, when they were hard pressed by redcoats, and had also given them valuable information of the intentions of the enemy.

Might he not do so again?

The thought came to Dick like a flash, and he decided to find out.

He ran up the steps and knocked on the door.

It was some time before there was any response to his knocking, and then he heard footsteps in the hall.

Then the door was opened; only a few inches, however.

A face appeared at the opening.

Dick recognized it.

It was the face of Mr. Sanderson, his friend.

Mr. Sanderson recognized Dick, also.

He opened the door quickly.

"Come in!" he said. "I remember you! You are Dick later, the patriot spy!"

CHAPTER VII.

A REMARKABLE AFFAIR.

"Yes, that is my name," replied Dick, as he entered the house and shook hands with the old man. "I was not certain that you would remember me."

"I have a good memory for faces."

The old man led the way along the hall, and conducted Dick into the library.

This was evidently Mr. Sanderson's lounging room.

"Sit down," he invited, and Dick did so.

Mr. Sanderson sat down, also, and looked at Dick with interest.

"Well, how has the world used you since you were here?" he asked.

"Very well, indeed," replied Dick. "And how has it been with you?"

A cloud crossed the old man's face, and Dick remembered the great sorrow which had been upon the old man when he was there, eight months before.

The old man had a daughter named Gertrude.

The daughter had received the attentions of Captain Frink, who was a great flirt, and the captain had taught the young woman to love him, and had then deserted her, as he had deserted many young women before her.

The shock had crazed the poor girl, however, and when Dick and Bob were at the house, eight months before, her father had her confined in a room.

It was a terrible, a heart-breaking affair, and Dick judged from the look on the old man's face that the young woman was no better.

He did not ask any questions, however.

But suddenly a thought came to him:

The "woman in black!"

Could it be possible that the woman in black was Gertrude Sanderson?

And then another, and even more startling thought, came to Dick:

Could it be possible that Gertrude Sanderson was the woman in black, and that she had killed Captain Frink?

Could it be that, insane though she was, the young woman might have searched until she found Captain Frink, and then killed him.

It was not impossible that this should be the case.

But how had she entered the house in which the soldiers were quartered?

That was a mystery, too; in fact, it was all very mysterious, and Dick doubted whether it would ever be cleared up.

"If she hunted Captain Frink down, and killed him, he got only what he deserved," thought Dick, and then he dismissed the matter from his mind.

The old man seemed to divine, intuitively, that thoughts of his afflicted daughter were in Dick's mind, for he said:

"You know about my daughter, and would perhaps wish to know how she is now. She is still in—in—in the same condition, save that she is no longer violent. She has the freedom of the house, and comes and goes as she pleases. I fear she will never recover the use of——"

The old man paused and stared, open-mouthed.

He was looking past Dick and over his shoulder.

He looked as though he had seen a ghost, he turned so suddenly pale.

Dick turned his head and looked.

Entering the room was a beautiful young woman, though pale, as though just up from a sick bed.

It was Gertrude Sanderson, and—there was no light of insanity in her eyes now!

They were clear and bright, and the light of reason burned there, as was easy to be seen.

It was this self-evident fact that had caused the great pallor to overspread the face of her father.

He realized the great, glad fact, and the realization had been almost too much for him.

The young lady brushed her hand across her face, and looked at her father with a frightened, half horrified look.

"Oh, father!" she exclaimed, "I have had such a horrible dream!"

Instantly Dick divined the truth.

The young woman had suddenly regained her reason, and imagined she had been asleep and dreaming.

She must be allowed to think so, or the result might be bad.

She must not be allowed to know she had been out of her mind.

Dick realized that Mr. Sanderson was all broken up, and was afraid he might say or do something which would give the young woman a shock and cause her to return to her former condition.

Dick placed his hand on Mr. Sanderson's knee, and said in a whisper: "Sh! control yourself! Leave everything to me!" and then he rose and turned toward the young woman.

"Is it you, Miss Gertrude?" he said gently; "you should not have risked the exertion of moving about until after the physician said you could do so with safety."

"Who are you? I don't know you! I don't know what you mean!" said Gertrude, staring at Dick in surprise, yet seeming favorably impressed by his frank and handsome face. "What does he mean, father?"

"I have been here for a long time, Miss Gertrude," Dick said gently. "I have been attending to your father's work while he has been taking care of you—or helping do so. You have been very ill."

The young woman brushed her hand across her forehead.

"I—have—been— ill?" she asked.

"Yes, with fever, Miss Gertrude; fever which robbed you of all knowledge of your surroundings during the time that you were sick."

Mr. Sanderson had the cue now, and he rose to his feet and stepping to his daughter's side, slipped his arm around her waist, kissed her, and led her to a sofa at one side of the room, and seating her thereon, took a seat beside her.

There was the light of a great happiness in the old man's eyes.

Dick's brain was busy.

He was sure he knew what the young woman's "horrible dream" was.

She had a faint remembrance of hunting Captain Frink down and killing him, and now she thought she had been asleep for but a short time, and had had a horrible dream.

She must be made to think it was the creation of her disordered brain, racked by the fever.

If she were to repeat the "dream" to her father, he would take into account the strange, tragic death of Captain Frink, suspect that his daughter had done it, and the suspicion would make him miserable.

If the knowledge could be kept from him he would be very happy.

Certainly, if Gertrude had killed Captain Frink—as Dick believed—then she was not responsible, and neither she nor her father must ever know she had done such a thing.

He walked over and stood in front of the two.

Suddenly Gertrude shuddered and placed her hands over her face.

"Oh, that horrible, horrible dream!" she said.

Dick looked at Mr. Sanderson significantly, and then leaning over, whispered in his ear:

"Whatever you do don't ever let her relate the supposed dream! It might throw her back into her former condition. Make her think of something else; make her forget it, and avoid the subject always!"

Mr. Sanderson nodded, and then Dick took the girl's hands and gently pulled them away from in front of their owner's face.

"What you think a dream, Miss Gertrude," he said, gently and convincingly, "is even not so much as that. It was the creation of your disordered, fever-racked brain, and you should dismiss it entirely from your mind. Don't think of it. It will only worry you, and make your recovery from the fever all the slower."

"That is a fact, Gertrude," said her father; "it is just as Mr. Slater says."

"Perhaps it will be best," the girl said; "but it will be a hard task; it," with a shudder, "keeps intruding itself into my mind."

"It will stop doing so presently," said Dick. "Perhaps if you were to lie down and remain quiet you would be better off."

"Oh, no; I wish to remain here with father!" and the girl took one of her father's hands in hers, and held it firmly.

"Very well," said Dick; "but I hope you will excuse us for just a few moments? I wish to speak to your father."

"Certainly."

Dick and Mr. Sanderson went out into the hall.

"Of course, you have heard of the suicide of Captain Frink?" asked Dick.

Mr. Sanderson looked surprised, and his face hardened as he heard the name of the man who had caused his daughter—and himself, through her—so much trouble.

"Yes, I heard of the occurrence soon after it happened. But why do you speak of it?"

"For this reason: To warn you not to let your daughter know of it," said Dick earnestly. "The knowledge might throw her back into her former state. Keep the knowledge of his fate a secret from her always, if you possibly can!"

"I guess you are right about that," agreed Mr. Sanderson. "I shall do as you say."

"Good!" said Dick, "and now can you give me any information of the intentions of the British?"

"I am sorry to say that I cannot, Dick," was the reply. "I have not been in very good standing with the British for several months past. They have not bothered me, but I now I have been watched more or less."

"Well, then, I will be going. I must learn something in some manner."

"Will you see Gertrude before you go?"

"No; she thinks I am in your employ, so I must leave without seeing her—you understand; so as not to arouse her suspicions."

"I see; well, I would be pleased to have you remain with us for a week, but I know that duty calls you, so will not insist on your staying a moment longer than you wish to stay."

"Thank you; I must be going."

Then, after expressing the hope that Gertrude would remain in the full possession of her mental faculties permanently, Dick shook hands with Mr. Sanderson, and took his departure.

"What a wonderfully strange affair!" thought Dick. "Well, I hope that everything will work out right, and that Mr. Sanderson and his daughter may yet see many years of happiness."

Dick was a noble-hearted youth, and the suffering of worthy people, whether anything to him or not, always appealed strongly to him.

And Mr. Sanderson was his friend, and had been very kind to him and had rendered him aid, months before, when he was in the city on a spying expedition.

Dick made his way to the house in which the regiment Mortimer and Winston belonged to was quartered, and

went upstairs with as great an air of sang froid as though he had been quartered there for months.

He knew that the uniform which he wore made this safe for him.

The majority of the members of a regiment were strangers to each other. They divided up into little cliques and made no effort to know a great number.

Dick had been in his room an hour, when he heard footsteps coming along the hall.

"There come Mortimer and Winston now," thought Dick.

He came very near stepping out into the hall and addressing them as they approached, but refrained.

He was glad a few moments later that he had done so.

The two young men advanced along the hall to their room and, opening the door, entered.

The partition between the two rooms was not very thick and Dick could hear what they were saying with perfect distinctness.

The very first words he heard struck a chill to his heart.

"Say, old man, who would have thought that Barton was a rebel spy! He is a bold one, isn't he!"

These were the words, in Mortimer's voice.

"Great guns! They've found it out!" thought Dick. "I wonder how they discovered it?" he asked himself.

"You are right, Mortimer," was the reply to Mortimer's remark, in Winston's voice. "I was never so surprised in my life!"

"Nor I. I can hardly believe it, even yet!"

"They say he is in reality Dick Slater, a well-known rebel spy. I've heard of him, haven't you, Mortimer?"

"Oh, yes, I've heard of him. They say he is the most daring and dangerous spy in the whole rebel army, and I am inclined to believe it, now that we have seen what he is capable of doing."

"That's right. We were nicely taken in by the young fellow. Say, he was pumping us last night, old man, and we didn't know it."

"I guess he was. I thought it was mere idle curiosity at the time."

"So did I; or I ascribed it to a very natural curiosity he would have if he was thinking of joining the British army."

"Say, that's the best joke of all! Talk of him joining the British army! But, say, old man, I'm hanged if I didn't take a liking to the fellow. How was it with you?"

"I did, too. If he wasn't a rebel he'd be all right."

"So he would. Well, I guess I will go in the other room and take a look through the pockets of that suit of his. There might be something of importance found—something that General Howe would like to become possessed of."

"Letters, despatches or something like that, eh? I don't

think you'll find anything. He is altogether too smart to be so careless as all that."

"I think so myself; however, it will be an easy matter to look."

"Great guns! Mortimer is coming in here!" thought Dick, leaping to his feet and looking around the room. "What shall I do?"

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME VALUABLE INFORMATION.

The youth did not wish to be discovered.

He wished it for two reasons.

One was that he did not wish to run any chances of being captured.

The other was that he did not wish to have to inflict injury upon the two young redcoats who had been so kind to him.

He had learned in the brief time he had been with them to like them, and he would feel badly if he should be forced to wound either of them.

He could not tamely submit to capture.

That was out of the question.

If they entered the room and found him there, and demanded his surrender, he would have to fight.

So Dick decided that he would not let himself be found there if he could help it.

He looked around the room.

His eyes rested on the bed.

He might crawl under it.

But it would not be a desirable place of hiding.

They would be likely to see him there.

No, he must find a better place.

Another glance and his eyes fell upon the door leading to a small closet at one side.

This would at least be better than no hiding place at all.

The two young soldiers would be in the room in a few moments.

If he escaped detection, even for a few minutes, he would have to act quickly.

Dick tiptoed across the room, quickly and noiselessly.

He opened the door.

What he saw within the little closet nearly caused him to utter an exclamation aloud.

At one end of the little closet was a trap door about two feet square.

The trap door was open, or he would not have discovered its existence so promptly.

An opening leading downward was revealed.

At the side, and disappearing from sight down the shaft was a small iron ladder.

In an instant Dick understood how the "woman in black" had appeared and disappeared so mysteriously.

She had known and had made use of this secret shaft and ladder.

Dick had no doubt that the ladder extended clear down into the basement.

He felt that the means of escape lay before him.

He would have to hurry, however.

The sound of the footsteps of Mortimer and Winston out in the hall warned him that delay of so much as a few seconds would prove fatal to his chances of escape.

He leaped through the opening, into the closet, and pulled the door shut.

Then he quickly, but carefully, made his way down the ladder, till his head was below the trap door opening, and then he reached up and closed the door.

As he did so the closet door came open.

Mortimer and Winston had opened it to see if any of Dick's clothing was in there, and had Dick been a moment later in closing the trap door its existence would have been discovered.

As it was, Mortimer's eyes were directed toward the wall of the closet at the point where clothing would naturally be hanging, and he did not see the trap door move.

Had he been looking downward he must certainly have seen it.

Dick made his way slowly down the ladder.

He was in utter darkness, and could not see, so had to be careful.

It would have been awkward to have suddenly come to the end of the ladder and taken a tumble.

Of course Dick did not much fear anything of this kind.

But it was a good plan always to be careful and go slow.

"That was a close shave!" he thought. "Well, I think I am all right now."

Dick continued on down the ladder, and when he had gone a distance of, he judged, twenty-five to thirty feet, he heard voices.

The voices seemed to be close by, and the youth realized that the shaft in which he was was separated from a room by a partition which made it possible to hear what was being said in the room.

The words Dick heard spoken arrested his attention at once.

They were:

"So that is General Howe's plan, is it?—to go across New Jersey and capture Philadelphia, the rebel capital?"

"Yes," replied another voice; "that is the plan."

"Well, it is a bold one; still, with such a superior force as we have, I should think we should be able to do this."

"I think so."

"A couple of British officers!" thought Dick, "and they are unwittingly giving me the very information I have been wanting!"

"How soon will the commander-in-chief move on Philadelphia?"

"Oh, I don't know; the first of the month, I think."

"Well, the capture of the rebel capital ought to put a finishing touch to the hopes of the rebels, don't you think?"

"I think so."

The two conversed for several minutes, and told the plans of General Howe in detail.

Dick stood there, holding onto the rungs of the ladder, and taking in everything that was said, and making mental notes of it.

It was a rare stroke of good fortune, he thought.

All he would have to do now was to be careful and make his escape from the city, and get back to Morristown Heights with the information.

Then the commander-in-chief would know what to do.

Then, presently the conversation of the two changed to Captain Frink, and his mysterious death. As Dick had no intention of trying to escape from the house and city before night, however, he remained where he was.

Then presently the conversation turned upon himself.

"Did you hear the latest news?" asked one.

"I don't know. To what do you refer?" from the other.

"To the matter of the rebel spy being in the city—a youth named Slater. I heard about it as I came in, a few minutes ago."

"I hadn't heard about it," from the other.

"It is quite an interesting story," the other went on, "and shows what a daring chap the young man is. It is said that he rode across the ferry from Paulus Hook yesterday evening on a boat that carried fifteen to twenty of our soldiers. He got into a difficulty with one of the soldiers—that quarrelsome fellow Larkins, by the way, and after knocking Larkins down, the young rebel spy finished by throwing him into the river. On learning that Larkins could not swim, young Slater leaped into the river and went to his rescue, and succeeded in saving Larkins from drowning! What do you think of that?"

"He must be a rather good-hearted, chivalrous sort of fellow, I should say."

"He surely is! Well, he came on across, and came here

to this very house, on invitation from a couple of the men— young Mortimer and Winston—and stayed here all night!"

"That was rather a bold proceeding, wasn't it?"

"Yes, but quite in line with his way of doing. He even made Mortimer and Winston think that he contemplated joining the army!"

"He is a brainy fellow, as well as a bold one!"

"Oh, yes; there are few smarter fellows to be found anywhere."

"I should say so!"

"He even penetrated into the very presence of General Howe this morning, and then went from there to the jail in company with Mortimer and Winston and the three started back to headquarters with the prisoner, General Lee. Doubtless the young fellow thought it would not be safe to venture back into the presence of the commander-in-chief a second time; at any rate, he managed to become separated from the others, and that was the last that was seen of him. He is in the city somewhere, but where no one knows. Searching parties are out and everybody is on the lookout for him, but I would be willing to wager a good sum that they do not capture the young fellow!"

"They will not, if I can help it, my friend!" thought Dick, with a grim smile. "Well, I have learned a great deal in the short time I have been here! I am much obliged to you, I am sure!"

Dick had learned that the soldiers were on the lookout for him, and he felt that it would be unsafe to venture out in the daytime.

"I must remain indoors till nightfall, and then try to slip out and away without being seen and recognized," he thought.

The two men on the other side of the wall now began talking on other topics of no interest to Dick, and he began making his way on down the ladder.

He was growing tired hanging there like a huge spider on a web.

He went down quite a ways, and finally came to the bottom.

He was, as he had expected he would be when he reached the bottom, in a basement.

He was in a small room, however, and when he tried the door he found it locked.

"That is bad!" he thought. "I wonder how 'she' got into and out of this room?"

Then a thought struck him:

"Doubtless she has the key to the lock on the door," he murmured.

There was one small window in the room—a sort of

transom that turned on iron "pegs" fitted into the ends, and these pegs fitted into holes in the casement.

"If I could get that transom loose I could crawl through there and escape, as soon as it becomes dark," thought Dick, and he seized hold of the transom and gave it a shake.

It rattled considerably.

"It is quite loose," the youth thought. "I half believe I can break it away from its fastenings."

The window was on the side of the house toward the backyard.

This suited Dick.

"If it was the front I would have hard work getting out and away without being seen," he said to himself; "but this way I can make it, all right."

Dick disliked the prospect of having to remain in the little basement room all the rest of the day, but it was necessary if he was to take personal safety into consideration, and he made up his mind to endure it as philosophically as possible.

This he did.

Noontime came; then the hours of the afternoon rolled slowly away.

Dick was hungry, but he had to endure the pangs of hunger as best he could; there was no chance of getting anything to eat.

The sun went down at last, and then the dusk came on.

It was almost time for Dick to get to work.

He waited, however.

He wished it to get as dark as it would be before beginning work.

He did not wish to be discovered while at work.

That would result in his being captured like a rat in a trap.

As soon as it was fully dark he began work.

He was very strong, and by jerking and pulling at the transom he hoped to be able to get it loose.

He found this was going to be a pretty difficult task.

He worked away, however, and presently realized that he was getting the transom loosened up, and after nearly an hour of hard labor, he succeeded in wrenching it entirely out.

A low exclamation of satisfaction escaped him.

"Good!" he murmured; "now I'll get out of here in a jiffy!"

There was a box in one corner of the little room.

Dick was well aware of its presence there, for he had sat upon it nearly the whole day.

He placed this box immediately beneath the window and stepped up on top of it.

This brought him up high enough so that he could work

his way through the window, and he did so as quickly as possibly.

He rose to his feet.

"Now, to get my horse!" he murmured. "He is in a stable in this backyard somewhere. I'll find him and then get away from here in a hurry!"

"You will, eh?" cried a triumphant voice in Dick's ear. "Well, we'll see about that! I don't think you will get away in such a hurry as you think for, my bold young fellow!"

And then Dick felt himself seized from both sides at once!

CHAPTER IX.

A LIVELY CHASE.

Dick was taken by surprise.

But he was not disposed to yield to capture without a struggle.

It would be bad if he should be made a prisoner.

He would be placed in the jail he had visited that morning.

From what he had seen of the jail it was a strong building.

Escape from it would be the next thing to impossible.

If he was captured the chances were a hundred to one that he would not get to take the information which he had acquired to the commander-in-chief.

So he must not let himself be captured.

Thoughts similar to those outlined above flashed through Dick's mind like the lightning's flash, as he felt the hands gripping his shoulders, and heard the triumphant voice in his ear.

The next instant he began a fight for liberty.

The thought came to him that there were but two of the fellows.

And he had outdone two men in fair and open combat on more than one occasion.

He might be able to do it again.

It would not be necessary to overcome the two.

It would be only necessary to keep them from overcoming him.

Then, by breaking away from them and running, he might be able to make his escape.

He would try hard to accomplish this.

Dick gave a powerful, wrenching twist, and very nearly got loose from the two the first thing.

They uttered oaths, and managed to get their holds again, however.

"No you don't!" growled one; "we've got you and you might as well give up!"

Dick's answer was a blow fair in the fellow's face.

The blow was a severe one.

It was also unexpected.

The man gave utterance to a cry of pain and rage, and unconsciously let go of Dick's shoulder.

Quick as a flash Dick gave a quick, wrenching twist, and at the same time tripped the other fellow.

The redcoat went down.

He hung to Dick's arm, however, and pulled the youth down with him.

Quick as a flash Dick dealt the fellow a severe blow in the face.

As had been the case with the other fellow, the shock and pain from the blow caused this fellow to let go his hold on Dick's arm.

Dick leaped to his feet.

As he turned, he was confronted by the first man whom he had floored.

"You would, would you?" the fellow cried; "take that, and see how you like it."

He struck out at Dick as he spoke.

His words was sufficient warning for the youth.

He leaped to one side and avoided the blow.

Then he dealt the fellow a blow on the jaw.

The blow floored the man a second time.

With an exclamation of satisfaction Dick leaped away.

He made for the alley at the rear of the backyard.

The second redcoat whom Dick had struck had now scrambled to his feet, and he cried: "Halt! or I will fire!"

Dick did not halt.

Nor did he vouchsafe an answer.

He kept on running.

Crack!

The redcoat had fired.

He had fired to kill, too.

At least so Dick believed, for the bullet had grazed the side of the youth's head.

"Halt, I say!"

This order was ignored by Dick, as the other had been, and then, crack! went the second pistol of the redcoat.

Dick heard the sing of the bullet, but it had not hit him, so he did not care for the singing.

"That fellow is a pretty good shot!" thought Dick. "I'm glad he has no more pistols!"

The other redcoat had regained his feet by this time, and

he fired both his pistols at Dick in quick succession, but the bullets went wild.

"He's not as good a shot as the other fellow," thought Dick. "Well, they can't fire upon me any more at present and that's a comfort!"

The two redcoats leaped after Dick, however, and shouted for him to "Stop! Stop!"

This was the one thing of all others which Dick did not care to do, however.

He kept right on running, and as he reached the backyard fence he brought all his strength and agility into play, and cleared the fence at a bound.

He had not slackened his speed a particle.

Then he darted up the alley like a streak.

The redcoats were not such athletes.

They were unable to clear the fence at a bound, as the fugitive had done.

They had to come almost to a stop and climb over said fence.

This gave Dick quite a nice lead.

He was already almost to the street, and by the time his pursuers had got under way, running once more, he reached the street and darted around the corner.

As he did so he collided with a man in British uniform and knocked him headlong to the pavement.

The man set up a lusty shouting, interspersed with oaths, and began scrambling up.

A fleeting glance at the man's face had told Dick that the man was Captain Parks, an officer who knew him, and who had tried on more than one occasion to capture him.

"Score one for me, Captain Parks!" thought Dick.

He did not let this encounter delay him.

He was away again up the street like the wind.

Seeing a number of redcoats coming down the street toward him, Dick left the sidewalk and ran diagonally across the street toward the next street which crossed this one at right angles.

The two pursuing redcoats emerged from the alley just as Captain Parks had scrambled to his feet and was readjusting his hat, which had fallen off when he went down.

"Who was that fellow?" asked the worthy captain, in an angry voice.

"That was Dick Slater, the rebel spy!" one of the redcoats replied, and they rushed onward in pursuit.

"What!" almost shrieked the captain; "twenty pounds to the man who captures the young scoundrel!"

The offer of twenty pounds for the capture of Dick seemed to stimulate the two mightily, but they could not gain on Dick.

He was very fleet of foot.

Then the two saw the soldiers coming down the street, and yelled to them.

"Stop that fellow!" they cried; "head him off. Don't let him get away! He is Dick Slater, the rebel spy!"

This woke the soldiers up instantly.

They left the sidewalk and ran slantingly across, in an effort to head Dick off before he could enter the side street.

But they could not do it.

Dick was making great speed.

And he was nearer the entrance than they were.

He reached the street twenty yards in advance of them.

He darted down the street and had them directly behind him.

Dick was sure he could outrun the redcoats.

But just then he heard the excited voices of the two with whom he had had his hand-to-hand encounter.

"Fire on him!" they shrieked. "Don't let the spy escape! If you can't catch him, kill him!"

"Now for trouble!" thought Dick. "There's a dozen or more of those fellows, and it'll be a volley when it comes."

It was likely to come at any moment.

Soldiers as a rule are not slow to use their firearms.

The use of said firearms is their trade, and they like to keep in practice as much as possible.

These fellows had been cooped up in New York all winter.

They had had few, if any, opportunities to do any shooting.

So they welcomed this opportunity, and decided to take advantage of it.

Realizing that the redcoats would fire very soon, Dick exerted himself to the utmost.

He expected to hear the crack of the pistols and the whistle of the bullets at every leap he made, but he reached the next street, and still there had come no shots.

With a feeling of relief, Dick turned sharply to the left, leaping around the corner of the building at the corner of the street.

At the same instant there came the sound of pistol shots.

The redcoats had fired.

Just a trifle too late, however.

But just at the right time to suit Dick.

The youth knew the direction to the ferry, and he was making his way in that direction, as nearly as he was able to do so.

"I think I shall be able to make it, all right," he thought.

"The trouble will be to get across the river—or, rather, to get started before the redcoats can get there."

This would be the difficult part, sure enough.

He would have to deceive the ferryman into taking him across.

If the redcoats got there before the boat left the shore Dick would not be able to get across at all.

He would have to try escaping by running through the streets again.

Dick realized this, and he ran as he had never run before.

He soon reached the ferry.

The ferryman was at his post.

Dick came running down and leaped aboard the boat, startling the ferryman.

"Quick!" cried Dick. "General Howe is sick! I am the bearer of a message to an officer at Paulus Hook! Start the boat immediately! I must be across the river at the earliest possible moment!"

Dick's manner was so hurried and eager, and yet so decided and his tone so authoritative that the ferryman leaped to obey without a word.

He cast off, and soon the boat was moving away from the shore.

The boat had scarcely left the shore, however, before the redcoats came into view, running with all their might.

"Stop!" they almost shrieked; "stop that boat! Don't take that fellow across the river! He is the rebel spy, Dick Slater! Stop!"

The ferryman and his assistant would have stopped the boat, but Dick whipped out a pair of pistols and covered them.

"Go ahead!" he cried, in a firm, threatening voice. "Don't you dare stop, for if you do, I'll shoot you dead in your tracks! I am Dick Slater, as he says, and I am desperate! Keep the boat moving if you value your lives!"

Evidently the men valued their lives, for they kept the boat moving, as Dick had ordered, and it drew gradually and steadily away from the shore, much to Dick's satisfaction.

He was afraid, however, that the redcoats, furious at his getting away from them, would fire another volley, and in this he was correct.

When they reached the edge of the river the ferry boat was fifty yards out in the river.

"Fire a volley!" cried one; "fire! kill the spy!"

"You'll kill your friends, if you do!" called Dick, but the British soldiers did not seem to care particularly if they did do so.

"Serve them right for not stopping when we ordered them to do so!" was the reply, and the ferryman and his assistant gave utterance to groans of fear.

"When you hear him say 'fire!'" said Dick to the two men in a low tone, "drop flat upon the deck of the boat at

full length. It will be only one chance in a hundred if they hit you then!"

Just then the word "Fire!" was heard from the shore, and Dick and the two ferrymen threw themselves at full length on the bottom of the boat.

The bullets whistled above them, but neither of the three were hit.

"They have no more shots," said Dick, leaping to his feet. "They fired at me once before. Now, up and get to work!"

The two clambered, slowly and unwillingly, to their feet and went to work again.

"I think I am safe now!" thought Dick, but as he glanced back, he saw that he was not yet safe.

There was a rowboat at the wharf, and several of the redcoats had leaped in, and it was their evident intention to pursue the ferryboat and overtake it, if possible.

"If they can row to do any good they will be able to overtake us!" thought Dick. "I wish that old rowboat had been at the bottom of the river!"

However, it was not at the bottom of the river, and he would have to make the best of the situation.

"They will not board us if they do overtake us!" thought Dick, with a grim look on his face, and a compression of his lips. "I will shoot the first man that attempts to set foot on the ferryboat's deck."

There was one danger Dick would have to look out for, however, and that was that of being shot in the back by the redcoats in the rowboat.

Only two were rowing.

The other two—there were four—could, and without a doubt, would reload their pistols; then when they came up close behind the ferryboat, they could, unless Dick surrendered, shoot him.

It was necessary that he should keep an eye on the two ferrymen, and it was difficult to watch them and the pursuing redcoats at the same time.

Dick glanced back every few seconds, and saw that the boat had left the shore and was coming after the ferryboat at a very fair rate of speed.

Dick kept watch of them, and as they drew nearer and nearer he began figuring on how to defeat their object of making him a prisoner.

He walked to where the two ferrymen were standing.

"Have you pistols?" he asked sternly.

Both answered in the affirmative.

They would have been glad to have lied about it, but something in the stern tones and looks of the youth forced them to tell the truth.

"Lay the weapons on the deck!" the youth ordered.

The men obeyed.

"Now get to work again, and get this boat across the river in the quickest possible time!" was Dick's next order, and the men returned to their work.

Dick gathered up the four pistols which the men had laid on the deck, and walked back to the stern of the boat.

"Now, I think I can hold them in check!" Dick murmured grimly. "I'll do so, even if I have to shoot to kill! They would kill me if they could, and found they could not capture me."

It was night time, of course, but the moon was up, and as it was a clear night, it was possible to see half way across the river with reasonable distinctness.

Dick could see the boat and the redcoats in it quite distinctly, as they were not to exceed seventy-five yards behind the ferryboat.

The small boat was gaining quite rapidly, too, and Dick felt that it would overtake the ferryboat while yet it was a quarter of a mile from the shore.

In this he was right, for it turned out as he figured it would.

The rowboat came closer and closer, and at last it was within twenty feet of the ferryboat.

"Back water!" then cried Dick, leveling his pistols; "back water or I will shoot you dead! I have six pistols here and I will agree to kill the four of you out of six shots! Back water if you value your lives!"

CHAPTER X.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS' " PLUCK.

"We can shoot, too!" retorted one of the redcoats who sat in the stern, with a couple of pistols in his hands.

"Not very straight, from out that rocking rowboat," replied Dick coolly. "This boat is steady, and I can kill at every shot. Take your choice—back water or die!—and choose quickly!"

The two men in the stern, holding weapons in their hands, might have braved it out, and held their own, but the two at the oars, being closer to Dick, and with their backs toward him, did not fancy the situation, and they took the matter into their own hands, and back water energetically.

"Now stay away!" ordered Dick; "you take your lives in your hands if you come after us again!"

Dick had the redcoats thoroughly overawed, and they did not renew rowing.

Their boat fell back quite rapidly.

"I believe I shall escape them after all!" thought the youth. "Well, I hope I may be able to do so!"

A few minutes later the ferryboat reached the landing place.

The rowboat was a hundred yards out in the river.

Dick threw a piece of silver on the floor as he stepped ashore.

"To pay you for bringing me across," he said.

"But our weapons," said the ferryman; "you have our pistols."

"And intend to keep them. Ferrymen have no business having pistols. You are workingmen, not soldiers."

The ferrymen growled out something, but Dick merely laughed.

"Good-bye!" he cried; "give my regards to the gentlemen in the boat yonder."

Then Dick hastened away.

He was not yet out of danger.

He was still within the British lines, as it were, there being a garrison at Paulus Hook.

Dick was figuring on the best course to pursue in making his escape as he ran.

He did not wish to start across the country afoot.

It was twenty miles to Morristown Heights.

That would be a long walk.

If he could get possession of a horse it would make this trip much quicker and easier.

Dick knew where to go.

He ran right to the quarters of the British soldiers.

"Quick!" he said to the astonished guard; "I am straight from General Howe and have important despatches for the officer in command at New Brunswick. I am to have a horse! Where will I find one?"

The excited manner of Dick and the energetic, determined manner in which he spoke had its effect on the soldier. He became excited also, and without stopping to think how irregular a proceeding it was, he directed Dick to the place where the horses were.

Dick rushed to the place, ordered a hostler to bridle and saddle a horse for him in double-quick time, and it was done.

Then Dick leaped into the saddle, and galloped away, just as a score of panting redcoats came running up.

"That's him. That's Dick Slater, the spy! Stop him! Shoot him!" was the cry.

"Stop me now—if you can!" cried Dick defiantly and triumphantly, and he rode off at a gallop.

Crack!—crack!—crack! went the pistols, but Dick was not hit by any of the bullets.

"Safe!" he murmured. "I am all right now, and will be at Morristown Heights before midnight!"

Dick rode at a gallop.

He was feeling extremely good.

He could have sung, but had other matters to occupy his mind with.

He was thinking of how glad the commander-in-chief would be to become possessed of the information which he had secured in the city.

It was a pleasant night and the ride to Morristown Heights was a pleasant one.

Dick reached his destination, as he had figured on doing, at about the midnight hour.

As there was no hurry, he decided not to bother the commander-in-chief that night.

It would do as well to wait till morning.

The members of his company of "Liberty Boys" were all sound asleep, of course, and Dick slipped in and went to his cot and lay down without having awakened one of them.

He was awakened next morning by feeling a blow on his chest.

Then, as he opened his eyes, they fell on his friend, Bob Estabrook, who had just discovered his presence in the quarters.

"Hello, Dick, you old rascal, you! When did you get back, anyway?" he cried.

"About midnight, Bob," replied Dick, rubbing his eyes and sitting up.

"Midnight, eh? Why didn't you wake a fellow up?"

"What was the use? I knew you would see me in the morning, Bob."

"Yes, but now you'll have to spend all the forenoon with the commander-in-chief, and I want to hear the story of your adventures in New York."

"That reminds me, Bob. I must hurry and get my breakfast, and go and report to the commander-in-chief."

Dick had thrown himself down without undressing, and all he had to do was to make his toilet.

This he did, talking to Bob as he did so, and when he had finished they went to the messroom, Bob having already made his toilet.

They ate breakfast, and then Dick made his way to headquarters.

The commander-in-chief had breakfasted, and when Dick entered the room, he greeted the youth warmly.

"So you are back in safety, my boy?" he remarked.

"Did you get hold of any important information, Dick?"

"I did, your excellency!" replied Dick.

"Good! Of what does it consist?"

Dick went ahead then and told General Washington

what the plans of the British were, as he had heard them stated by the two officers.

The commander-in-chief listened with interest.

His eyes shone eagerly, and when Dick had finished he said:

"This is indeed important information! Now, I shall know just what to do. You have done well, Dick—exceedingly well!"

"I am glad to hear you say so, sir!" said Dick.

After some further conversation, the commander-in-chief asking Dick questions, Dick was told that he might return to his quarters.

He saluted and withdrew.

The commander-in-chief called a council of war immediately.

He laid the plans of the British before the members of his staff, and then they discussed the situation.

The council of war lasted till nearly noon.

It proved to be the unanimous opinion of all the members of the staff, the commander-in-chief included, that the proper move to make in order to enable them to checkmate the British was to move down and take possession of Middlebrook, which was only ten miles from New Brunswick.

The British could not pass here on their way to Philadelphia without sacrificing their communication with New York, and this might mean the destruction of the army.

It was a strong position, too, at Middlebrook, and it would be impossible for the British to storm it with success.

Preparations were begun at once.

The word went around that the move was to be made.

It enthused the patriot soldiers.

They had been cooped up and inactive so long that they longed to get into action.

And the change of base from Morristown Heights to Middlebrook seemed to promise action.

The "Liberty Boys" were especially delighted.

They were the youngest soldiers in the army.

Being youths of an average of eighteen, they longed for action, for lively work.

Two days later the army broke camp and marched to Middlebrook.

It took up its position here, and then a sharp lookout was kept for the British.

Dick had secured liberty of action for his company of "Liberty Boys," and they were out almost every day, and often at night, scouting around in search of small parties of redcoats.

They made several captures in this manner, and were encouraged to go ahead and keep the good work up.

One day they were riding along the road within five or six miles of New Brunswick.

They had ridden far and were thirsty.

They had been expecting to come to a house and get a drink, but no house had appeared, and as they emerged from the timber, one of the boys pointed across a little pasture, and said:

"Yonder is a creek. We can get a drink there."

"All right," said Dick, and he gave the order to dismount and tie the horses.

There was a high fence along the road, and it would be impracticable to go to the stream with the horses.

The youths dismounted and tied their horses, and then, climbing the fence, made their way across the pasture in the direction of the creek.

They had gone but a short distance when they were treated to a surprise.

Out of the timber two hundred yards beyond the little creek rode a body of British troopers.

The bugle sounded and they came across at a gallop.

The "Liberty Boys" saw they would not have time to retreat to the fence, mount their horses and escape, and Dick decided to stand their ground.

He gave the order to do so, and the "Liberty Boys" responded with a shout which was intended as a war cry and as defiance to the enemy.

On came the British.

They had to slow down while crossing the creek, and came on at a trot after crossing.

"Surrender!" cried the commander of the redcoats, waving his sword. "Surrender, in the name of the king!"

But the "Liberty Boys" were undismayed by the terrible odds.

"Let us bring down that hated flag and trample it in the dust!" cried Dick.

Then he gave the order to fire.

The youths fired on the instant.

A number of the British soldiers went down, among them the commander.

"Forward!" cried Dick, the heat of battle getting into his blood. "Forward! and fire with your pistols!"

With a wild, ringing cheer, the "Liberty Boys" rushed forward, and they fired two volleys from their pistols as they came.

It was a wonderful exhibition of sheer pluck in the face of terrible odds, and the redcoats were rendered incapable of action by the daring act.

They seemed not to know what to do.

Their commander was down; they had no head.

Another wild cheer from the "Liberty Boys" in response

to Dick's cry of "Charge bayonets!" and then the horses became frightened and began rearing and plunging.

Seeing this, the youths shouted and yelled louder than ever and waved their guns, and the fright became communicated to all the horses.

The next instant there was a veritable stampede, the horses whirling and racing back toward the timber from which they had only a few moments before emerged.

Several of the redcoats were thrown into the water when the horses leaped the creek.

It was an exciting spectacle, and one that was, too, somewhat ludicrous.

The idea of the company of "Liberty Boys" attempting to stand up before the troopers in the first place was something extraordinary, and now that they had not only done this, but had put the redcoats to flight, it was something to laugh at.

Dick was an able commander, however.

He had all the elements that go to make up a good general.

Having put a superior force to flight, he knew enough to let well enough alone.

"Build a bridge of gold for a flying enemy" is an old and true saying.

It is a wise saying.

Especially if the flying enemy happens to be the superior in strength or force.

If the temporary victor, flushed with the victory, pushes the flying enemy too hard, said enemy may turn on the pursuer and reverse the order of things.

Dick feared this might be the case this time, so he seized the opportunity to order a retreat.

The youths obeyed promptly, though some of them would have preferred following the redcoats, and soon they were at the fence where they had left their horses.

The wisdom of Dick's action was now apparent.

The British troopers had already regained control of their horses and were coming across the open space between the timber and the creek at a gallop.

Had Dick let the boys follow the troopers when their horses became unmanageable, the entire company would have been killed or captured.

"Mount and away, fellows!" ordered Dick. "Those fellows are mad now, and will make it hot for us if they can catch us!"

"But they can't catch us!" said Bob, with a chuckle.

"I doubt it, Bob; but we had better lose no more time than is unavoidable."

This was thought to be the case by all, and they mounted their horses as quickly as possible.

Then, with a wild shout of defiance, they rode away up the road at a gallop.

The British were eager to avenge the insult which the "Liberty Boys" had put upon them.

This was evident.

Their actions proved it.

They rode across the pasture at full speed.

They leaped down, tore down the fence in a dozen places, and led their horses through.

Then they mounted and set out in pursuit of the daring band of youths.

It was a lively race.

The British had good horses.

For a while they gained somewhat on the "Liberty Boys."

Dick noted this fact.

"We'll have to look out or they'll overhaul us!" he said to Bob.

"It looks that way, Dick," was the reply. "I wonder where they got hold of those horses?"

"I don't know; they are good goers, sure!"

The British themselves seemed to think they would catch the youths, for they set up a yell of triumph.

Their joy was a little bit premature, however.

Dick happened to look up a road which crossed the one they were on at a point a quarter of a mile ahead, and saw a large band of horsemen coming along at a gallop.

"Hurrah!" he cried; "yonder come some of our brave boys! Now we shall be able to turn the tables on the redcoats! We will chase them, instead of being chased!"

The youths saw their comrades coming, and a wild cheering yell burst from their lips.

The redcoats must have seen the reinforcements coming, too, for they suddenly stopped, turned around and struck out on the back track.

"After them!" cried Dick.

The "Liberty Boys" stopped their horses as quickly as they could, turned them around, and started in pursuit of the fleeing redcoats.

They followed the flying enemy a distance of a couple of miles, and then, having been unable to gain on them, Dick ordered a halt.

They stopped, turned around and rode back to meet the other band of patriot troopers.

"Well, couldn't you catch them?" asked the commander of the other company.

"No," laughed Dick; "their horses were too swift. We could not gain a foot on them, and finally decided that we might as well give up the chase."

"Well, you made them kick up a terrible dust, anyway," was the smiling rejoinder. "They won't stop running very soon, I'll wager!"

"Well, we'd have still been running and they after us if you hadn't shown up just when you did. We put them to flight once, but I'm afraid we couldn't have done it a second time."

The entire cavalcade started back to Middlebrook, where the headquarters of the patriot army were located, and they reached there after a ride of an hour and a half.

"I hope we will have a battle or two before long, Dick," said Bob that evening. "This thing of skirmishing around is growing monotonous. I want to see a good, big battle."

"Oh, you're too bloodthirsty, Bob!" smiled Dick.

The "Liberty Boys" were all eager for a general engagement between the British and patriot armies.

There had been no real battle since those of Trenton and Princeton, in the middle of the winter.

"If the British don't try to do something pretty soon I'm going to resign and go home, and go to work on the farm!" Bob declared.

"I guess you want to get home in order to get to see Edith, Bob!" laughed Dick.

"Maybe so, Dick. Well, I guess you wouldn't mind getting back there a spell yourself. You'd like to see Alice, eh, old man?"

"You're right about that!" with a laugh.

THE END.

The next number (12) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' PERIL; OR, THREATENED FROM ALL SIDES," by Harry Moore.

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